

REMARKS

I. INTRODUCTION

Reconsideration of the application in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested. Applicants respectfully submit that the pending application is entitled to a priority date of September 30, 1998. To this end, Applicants provide a copy of the certified translation of the priority document JP 10-277183. Accordingly, the primary reference Bouillet does not qualify as prior art relative to the subject application.

U.S. Patent No. 6,275,554 to Bouillet, issued August 14, 2001, and has a U.S. filing date of July 9, 1999. The earliest date under which Bouillet could be considered prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is July 9, 1999. Because the present application has a priority date of September 30, 1998, Bouillet is not prior art to the instant application.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending rejections must be withdrawn.

II. Request For Notice Of Allowance

Having fully responded to all matters raised in the Office Action, Applicants submit that all claims are in condition for allowance, an indication for which is respectfully solicited.

If there are any outstanding issues that might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is requested to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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